

MARCH 19, 1981

More rain has fallen since my last report. The San Angelo weather station has recorded close to two inches. It's about the same here at the ranch, except ranches need rain a lot more than the airfield does around the weather office.

Some cattle are drawn in spite of the mild winter and early spring. March is the take-off month in the Shortgrass Country. By that I mean that everything that we've managed to hold on the old cows by feeding sacked goods is taken off by the end-of-winter weakening disease. Along in February, or thereabouts, their digestive systems start utilizing the supplements and the old grass as a laxative. Dead hair covering rib cages and hollow spots become the dominant characteristic of the cow brutes.

Part of our trouble was the way I spread our cows out last fall. I overstocked the good pastures and under figured the short ones. It's a common mistake out here. These old drouth cattle do better on a ration that has about 33 percent dust and air. Too much roughage upsets their metabolism. On good winter grass, a native cow wastes herself grazing and digesting the dry matter. To really keep one in good winter condition, I like to see her resting close to the feed grounds and not walking off all her flesh.

Also, cattle breed up slower on the hard country. Under planned and improved grazing programs, if an operator isn't careful, his cows will calve out in 60 to 90 days. In the fall, he's going to be cashed out in two weeks time whether the market is ready or not. On a strung-out deal, there's always a handful of knock-headed light calves ready anytime there's the slightest spark in the prices. I never have understood all that business about high weaning weights. For the past three months over in San Angelo they've been docking calves because of their flesh. Just look how good it would've been to have taken a run at them with a load of thin calves that were losing the curl in their tails when they passes the 350 mark.

All that planned parenthood stuff goes against our deal. I don't buy bulls to rest them nine months out of the year. Separate bull pastures are what cause fence breakers. We save a lot of money getting our heifer calves bred before they leave their mothers and plenty of grass by ignoring having a bull pasture.

The grass and weeds are on a boom. In two more weeks this old country is going to make Adam and Eve's garden look like glass factory. Old timers say that it's been like this before in March, but they have to admit that the Indian were the ones that harvested the grass.